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## **Participatory urban governance as an innovation in institutional practice of Polish cities**

### **Abstract**

The problem examined in the paper is part of a broader reflection on public governance, especially in its territorial dimension. The author focuses mainly on the modernisation of the public sector in Poland and the world with regard to the principles of participatory democracy as evidenced by the practice of urban governance. In particular, the author focuses on one of the tools stimulating participation, i.e. participatory budgeting, which has recently become a breakthrough trend in institutional practice and which can be regarded as an innovation in public governance.

The aim of the paper is to examine the impact of the implementation of participatory budgeting on governance in selected Polish cities. The whole analysis is carried out in the context of normative assumptions and the analysed problem highlights the question of the standards of good public governance, which should be respected on the local level. The paradigm adopted by the author reflects the call for the “right to the city for the citizens”, i.e. an approach whereby cities should develop not only in order to support the economy but also to be able to meet people’s aspirations to a better quality of life.

### **Keywords**

public governance – cities – participatory urban governance – innovation in governance – Poland – participatory budgeting

### **Introduction**

The importance of transformation in urban governance as a necessity nowadays has been widely recognised for its significant effect on the quality of life and strengthening of democratic legitimacy. As such, efforts to build and/or improve participatory governance are crucial for the future of cities looking for innovative ways of development. Participatory governance implies a need for more scope for participation within the relationships between citizens and public authorities. This concept has been often considered as a way of making authorities more accountable and more responsive to the needs of different groups of stakeholders on the local

level. An important prerequisite for a successful long-term urban development is the knowledge of city users' perceptions of the attributes of participatory governance. Today Polish cities offer dynamic social and cultural experiences, chances of interactions with diverse groups, creative, intellectual as well as political milieus. On the other hand, still weak – although growing – economy, migration, social polarisation and socio-spatial inequality are some of the challenges cities are facing today. That is why it is worth exploring what strategies city dwellers use to maintain and strengthen ties within and across communities, what strategies they use to cope with exclusion, displacement, borders that separate and unite, or gender and class inequalities. Further questions that can be answered in this context relate to how urban policies shape opportunities for the future and constraints for different groups in cities.

This exploratory paper seeks to present the idea of participatory urban governance – both its theoretical foundations and empirical dimensions. It concentrates on one of its tools – participatory budgeting – which can be treated as a breakthrough in the traditional, bureaucratic approach to urban governance in Poland. Due to the considerable slowness of the opening of the Polish public administration system to new concepts of local development, participatory budgeting can be regarded as an innovation, i.e. a change in the existing approach to the organisation of public affairs. The paper provides a research tool for examining the implementation of participatory budgeting in selected Polish cities. The discussion will be preceded by an overview of the existing body of literature and research conducted so far on this subject. The idea is to point out the doctrinal sources of pursuing innovation in public governance: theories of democracy, civil society, knowledge, social capital and networks. Theoretical assumptions will be confronted with local stakeholders in an exploratory survey conducted for this paper. To this end the author proposes an analytical model for examining participatory budgeting. In this respect, the following case studies will be presented: Sopot, Łódź, Warszawa and Wrocław and confronted with the idea of participatory urban governance. The paper will close with conclusions and general recommendations concerning the prospects of participatory governance for the future of cities in Europe.

**Participatory urban governance and participatory budgeting — determination of terminology**

In many countries the public sector is currently undergoing fundamental changes, forced to do so by its environment. Yet in the conditions in which local governments operate in Poland public governance is still limited in many cases to legislative measures consolidating bureaucracy owing to the dysfunctions of local self-government, foremost among them being:

- statist dysfunctions, manifested in local governments becoming increasingly state-owned;
- autocratic dysfunctions, i.e. gradual weakening of local democracy;
- bureaucratic dysfunctions, i.e. administrative inefficiency linked to domination of officials in the functioning of local governments (LGs);
- financial dysfunctions, i.e. gradual limitation of financial autonomy of LGs;
- dysfunctions linked to the absorption of EU funds, i.e. financing of short-term and random projects and failure to use EU funds as a tool stimulating developmental changes;
- deficient community, i.e. growth of patrimonial-clientelist relations and generation of binding, subjectivity-limiting social capital;
- spatial dysfunctions, i.e. disorderly and uncontrolled management of space leading to the emergence of pathological spatial relations in urban areas;
- lack of developmental subjectivity, i.e. severely limited capability of most LGs to programme and boost the development of their territories, which implies their unsustainable development [Hausner 2013, p. 14].

The idea of network-based and integrated management of development from the perspective of “governance” is seen today as an optimistic prospect of a better solution to these dysfunctions, including ability to choose between alternative scenarios and variants of action as well as to set the right course of action and, consequently, more efficient and effective ways of solving problems on the local level. This brings in the specificity of governance, the idea of which is based on a belief that even if government is the preserve of the state, it should go beyond it, taking into account the private and the social sectors. With the emergence of power deficit, socio-political and economic transformations and the development of new technologies have shifted the centre of gravity from the centres that have hitherto determined development (politicians and administration) to new stakeholders (citizens, residents, enterprises, NGOs). There have emerged new forms of citizen involvement in actions initiated and controlled by the public authorities in the exercise of their statutory powers. The objective of this involvement is to improve the decision-making process and the quality of public services provided. It has been

recognised that public governance requires the existence of not just efficient administration but also of a well-organised and responsible civil society aware of its rights. In the local dimension a systematic application of the idea of “local governance” is associated primarily with P. John’s concept [John 2001]. The starting point is an analysis of local government institutions and their transformations. The scholar defines local governance as a flexible decision-making model based on loose horizontal networks of public and private actors. This denotes a change in the traditional model of self-government based on hierarchic, formal procedures and institutions. Thus “local governance” is not only about direct decision-making by virtue of executive powers, but also about creating a climate for collaboration between various actors to achieve common objectives. In his theory John points to:

- new forms of participation of local communities;
- the presence of critical citizens who no longer want to be just passive observers of the local political scenes;
- new pressure groups and the decline of clientelism in local politics;
- the role of market processes and significance of economic development to the political processes in cities.

The author draws here on the theory of urban regimes [see: Stone 1989] whereby what matters is the ability to relinquish the “power over”, and what is even more important is the ability to mobilise various resources for a specific purpose, i.e. “power to” (achieve something). The networks and relations between actors formulating and implementing local policies are open to participants other than only representatives of the public sector, and are often unstable. It should be noted at this point that the essence of the change in the attitude to local governance lies mainly in the fact that in the past mechanisms of representative democracy were at the centre and the key role was played by elected politicians organised in competing groups (political parties). Today we are dealing with alternative forms of participation, delegation of responsibility for decision-making and provision of services to various stakeholders (not necessarily elected). Networks often lack a formal hierarchy, which means that building trust between the actors is of key importance to the effectiveness of the functioning of local arrangements. Since no stakeholder – neither organizations nor, even more so, individual citizens – has enough resources to pursue its objective on its own, achievement of objectives in governance requires voluntary collaboration.

Participatory urban governance leads to a greater openness of the public authorities to citizens. This creates a real space for them to directly participate in the management of public

funds [Allegretti, p. 3]. It has been defined as “participatory budgeting”. The essence of citizens’ budget comes down to three main points. It can be a well-thought-out and implemented reform (also systemic reform), it can be a project or it can be a tool (as in the case of participatory budgeting procedures in Poland). As a well-thought-out reform procedure it denotes a type of decision-making concerning a part of the public budget at the disposal of a given administration unit and, at the same time, it constitutes a potential tool of participatory democracy. In a way it means relinquishing power as a matter of priority, put into effect first of all by elected public authorities. Participatory budgeting is also an element of participatory governance and thus a mechanism from the highest level of public participation. As such it should be marked by democratic discussion and decision-making process, in which each city resident has a chance of becoming involved in public affairs and, consequently, of actively influencing them. Thus it is a project-based solution which should facilitate a specific approach to thinking about the functioning of local communities, governance of local communities and influencing their development. The introduction of this form of participatory democracy is intended to increase citizens’ satisfaction with public services. This can lead to greater transparency and credibility of public authorities, greater participation in public life (particularly of excluded groups) as well as civic education. Its application can be treated as a manifestation of a change of paradigm in making decisions about common causes, in which – according to the idea of “governance” – decision-makers increasingly have to respect the subjective rights of their voters. Participatory budgeting is about agreement and negotiation instead of imposition of decisions from above. It makes jointly developed solutions more acceptable and satisfactory to society, thus ensuring better quality public services. It is a response to the citizens’ growing awareness and maturity, and to a strong civil society. As can be seen from the past experience of many cities all over the world implementing participatory budgeting, it can lead to a fairer division of public funds, higher quality of life, increased satisfaction with public services, greater transparency and credibility of the public authorities, increased participation in public life, also of excluded groups, and increased civic awareness [6th Status Report 2013].

Participatory budgeting was used for the first time at the turn of the 1990s. Its most often quoted example is the budget of Porto Alegre, a Brazilian city with a population of 3.5 million. It is the oldest, model participatory budget implemented with partial support of the government. Regarded as a point of reference today, it has had a strong impact on the definition of the term “participatory budgeting”. Given the variety in institutional practice, it is impossible to adopt a single universal approach to the topic. A more effective method of defining participatory

budgeting would be to point out characteristic standards and main elements of a solution to be regarded as a participatory budget. The literature on the subject contains a set of criteria that have to be met in order for an initiative to be classified as participatory budgeting. It is a specific set of rules and values which determine authentic involvement of citizens in decision-making concerning the local community and which are a manifestation of a novel way of thinking about the development of a local community, thinking open to the voice of members of this community. They include:

- discussions and debates among citizens, who will determine the projects and funds earmarked for them;
- the initiative must be regularly repeated every year;
- the initiative must involve the whole city and cannot be implemented only locally;
- the amount allotted to actions financed under participatory budgeting must be clearly specified at the beginning and the discussions must concern limited financial resources [see: Kęłowski 2013, Sinthomer, Herzberg, Röcke A., Allegretti 2012].

### **Methodological framework**

The starting point for the author's analysis of institutional practice in Polish cities is the model of public participation developed by the International Association for Public Participation [IAP 2007]. According to this model, participatory budgeting can be regarded as an instrument that can be limited only to unidirectional action without any impact on the decision-making process, it can take various interactive forms of inclusion or it can be full, partnership-based involvement in decision-making and in the implementation of decisions concerning public affairs. From the point of view of participatory governance the most optimal and desirable element is "empowerment", while "information" is today insufficient and the most unfavourable, because it is often limited to actions only simulating democratic solutions. What is also important with regard to any analysis of the implementation of participatory budgeting is to ascertain the following: What were the goals to be achieved by the introduction of this solution in the analysed cities and whether and to what extent were these goals communicated to the public? What promise was made to the citizens by the public authorities and was this promise kept? And if so, to what extent? What participation techniques were used (stabilising or activating) and to what extent in order to implement to the fullest extent a specific solution stimulating public participation by means of participatory budgeting? Answers to these questions will make

it possible to describe general scenarios of the development of participatory urban governance in Poland.

In her analysis the author has focused on the way participatory budgeting was implemented in the context of its model stages:

- preparation of the process;
- formulation of the rules governing the process;
- information-education campaign;
- development and submission of project proposals;
- verification of projects;
- discussion about projects;
- selection of projects to be implemented;
- monitoring of project implementation;
- evaluation of the process.

This is followed by a parametric assessment of the implementation of participatory budgeting in the context of stimulating public participation, in which the following values have been adopted:

- **2:** goal fully met
- **1:** goal partially met
- **0:** not applicable or goal not met

In order to establish to what extent participatory budgeting stimulates public participation, i.e. active relations between the public authorities and the citizens drawing on transparent and partnership-based rules, the goal of which is empowerment, the following values have been adopted:

- **10:** full empowerment, citizens have a real influence over decision-making processes, shaping them actively and responsibly. The subjectivity of both sides is respected and decision-making is consensual. Deliberation and participation are the overriding ways of shaping the public space on the local level;
- **8-9:** representatives of the public sector involve citizens in the formulation of public policies, they organise consultations on their own or the citizens' initiative, the consultations are open and their results are binding in the decision-making process. Thus there is genuine public participation, standards of better management of local development are formulated jointly, monitoring and evaluation are important tools in the learning processes;

- **6-7:** representatives of the public sector are beginning to notice the potential of citizen participation in decision-making: they come up with initiatives of organising consultations the results of which are taken into account in the decision-making process. They genuinely want to increase public participation, although they realise that it is not always an effective method for managing local development. In order to improve quality, they run information-education campaigns;
- **4-5:** representatives of the public sector take advantage of consultations, during which citizens propose their solutions. The public sector representatives may take them into account in their decisions. Public participation is treated opportunistically, instrumentally, sometimes it is simulated, though in favourable conditions (e.g. political will of decision-makers plus engagement of citizens) it can become a standard in local governance;
- **2-3:** minimum standards in the opening of the public sector to the external environment have been met, though the opening is limited to unidirectional “top-down” contacts (authorities-citizens) without any possibility of interaction. Public participation is not regarded as desirable, modernisation of the public sector is very slow, bureaucratic procedures are still in place, and the main decision-making criterion is legislative legitimacy;
- **0-1:** closed democracy, only for elected representatives with an absolute mandate. The representatives are not open to the voices of the citizens. They are willing to take into account external proposals only as a consequence of political calculations or extraordinary public dissatisfaction.

The cities presented as case studies of budgetary solutions implemented in Poland have been selected owing to their varied geographical locations (centre, north, west of the country) and relatively similar socio-economic conditions (dynamic economic growth, low unemployment rate, good demographic indicators). Each of them is an important development centre in its region: Sopot as part of the Tri-City urban area, Łódź in central Poland, Warsaw as the key metropolis in Poland and Wrocław – capital of Lower Silesia. In addition, they are major urban centres with populations of at least 500,000 (in the case of Sopot – together with Gdynia and Gdańsk) and organised civil society, known for their civic-patriotic roots and traditions. This is why – though it might be a bit of an exaggeration for normative reasons – they have been assigned the role of potential “leaders” that can set the standards for participatory governance in Poland.



## Sopot: How not to implement participatory budgeting

The idea of participatory budgeting in Poland was put into practice in 2011, when Sopot – as the first city – began to develop and implement this participatory governance tool. The rules were defined in the decision of the Sopot City Council of 11 May 2012 on public consultations with residents of Sopot over the city’s budget for 2013 [Uchwała XIX].

Sopot is one of the smallest cities in Poland: its population is less than 40,000 and it covers an area of only 17 square kilometres. Together with the neighbouring cities – Gdańsk and Gdynia – this seaside resort makes up the Tri-City with a population of nearly 750,000. It attracts tourists interested in the longest wooden pier in Europe or annual song contests organised in the Opera Leśna (Forest Opera) amphitheatre. Some come to Sopot also for their holidays to enjoy the benefits of staying in a health resort which the city formally became in 1999.

**Table 1.** Participatory budgeting as a tool for supporting public participation in Sopot

	<b>Information</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Involvement</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Empowerment</b>
<b>Public participation goal</b>	To provide the public with information about the rules and operating principles of participatory budgeting in the city.	None	Acceptance of proposals submitted by the public	None	Through its projects and balloting the public should participate in urban governance.
<b>Promise to the public</b>	We will inform you about (almost) everything that is important to you in connection with the process	We will consult nothing with you, we will define the rules and implement the projects	We will give you an opportunity to express your needs and become involved in the city’s affairs	Thanks to PB we can get to know your needs	By allocating funds to the citizens’ budget, we also empower the public
<b>Example public participation techniques</b>	information leaflets information meetings	None	submission forms	partially submission forms	submission forms balloting
<b>Stage I (preparing the process; formulating the rules governing the process, information-publicity campaign)</b>	Preparation on the part of the public. Rules defined by the authorities. Full information. Good promotion of the initiative	No consultation with the public	No involvement of the public in rule formulation	No collaboration, rules defined by the authorities	No empowerment of the public, rules defined by the authorities

<b>Stage II (formulation and submission of project proposals)</b>	Yes, full information.	No consultation possibilities	Yes, full involvement	Yes, full collaboration	N/A
<b>Stage III (verification of projects, discussion about projects)</b>	Yes, information about projects accepted for balloting	No consultation with <b>authors of proposals</b>	No involvement owing to lack of communication between officials and authors of proposals	No collaboration	No. Officials decided which proposals were to be accepted for balloting
<b>Stage IV (selection of projects to be carried out)</b>	Partially. Information about winning projects but no summing up of the entire PB and no evaluation	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes. Projects that won the public ballot were earmarked for implementation
<b>Stage V (implementation monitoring and evaluation)</b>	Partially. Annual reports on PB implementation are published on Sopot's website.	None	None	None	None

Source: author's own analysis

Parametric assessment of the implementation of participatory budgeting in Sopot in the context of stimulating public participation:

**Σ (Information, Consultation, Involvement, Collaboration, Empowerment) =**

$([8.5+0+2+2+2]/5)$

$\Sigma(14.5/5)$  (out of possible 50 if the goal is fully met)

$\Sigma(2.9)$

The author's analysis shows that in the case of Sopot's participatory budget little was done to take into account model rules and stimulate public participation. Citizens showed interest and sought to actively participate in the venture, but the public authorities were not willing to make the public actively involved in decision-making and anticipated the process to a very limited extent. The most important oversights included a lack of participatory rule formulation, lack of contact between officials and authors of proposals, and lack of evaluation and follow-up at the end. Of key significance to these shortcomings was a lack of political will and publicly manifested reluctance of the city's mayor to be open to collaboration with the public as well as the mayor's personal decisions that could have led to accusations of "manual control" of the process without respect for the principles and rules of participatory budgeting.

Some elements of the Sopot model were decidedly positive. A very interesting (though not entirely effective) solution was to send each household information about the project with the submission form and the ballot paper. This made it possible to reach nearly all citizens, which aroused hopes that many of them would take part in the ballot.

This good practice was overshadowed by subsequent authoritative decisions of the Sopot authorities. After the ballot and selection of winning projects, the final say nevertheless rested with the mayor, who could recommend projects as he wished and he did so, ordering the implementation of two proposals that ended up further down the list. In addition, in creating this type of precedent, he increased the pool of funds allocated to projects within the framework of participatory budgeting. This constitutes a clear violation of the basic rules of participatory budgeting. Moreover, despite the earlier extensive campaign informing the public about the progress in the implementation of Sopot's citizens' budget, after the winning projects were selected for implementation, no results of the entire project were made available.

In the end the City Council Committee decided, following an intervention of some city activists, it was unfair for two projects from further down the list to be financed with the funds allocated to the whole participatory budget, and introduced a note saying that the two projects were added by the mayor and, consequently, that funds for their implementation had to come from elsewhere [Stokłuska, Kęblowski 2013].

The implementation of participatory budgeting in Sopot was very difficult owing to numerous problems and politicians' reluctance to acknowledge that such a solution was good and useful. It would seem, putting it most mildly, that the city authorities first did everything they could for participatory budgeting not to be introduced at all and then for it to be transformed into discussions and consultations that were not legally binding. This was an example of glaring disrespect for citizens' will.

However, it must be said that the very idea of participatory budgeting and its implementation was a considerable success. Sopot was the first among many cities that decided to implement such a solution and thus it could be said that as a pioneer of such actions in Poland it did well. However, it was not an example of a good practice. Piling up problems and obstacles not only does not help councillors exercise their powers but also shows how distant they are from the idea of a democratic state. As one of the initiators of participatory budgeting in Sopot, M. Gerwin, writes: "One of the fundamental shortcomings of Sopot's participatory budget is that it is not... participatory enough. The impression is that it is more of a budget of officials or councillors with some elements of public participation, yet it still has little in common with a genuine citizens' budget" [Gerwin 2013]. An example can be Sopot, the mayor of which in the

first edition of participatory budgeting chose several projects that were not necessarily the most popular among the citizens; also it turned out later that some projects were not implemented at all [see more: Ziółkowska]. Thus participatory budgeting in Sopot has turned out to be a tool that, not having been based on patience and trust in citizens, has little to offer in terms of public participation: it gives the citizens only a minimal degree of influence on the decisions concerning their city [see more: Kębłowski 2013].

### **Łódź: Leader in participatory budgeting in Poland**

Łódź is one of Poland’s biggest cities. Located in the central part of the country, it has a population of over 700,000. It is the main economic and cultural centre in the region, known primarily for its textile industry, which is gradually being replaced by other sectors, like manufacturing of household appliances. The city is divided into 36 residential districts. Despite the fact that in the past Łódź focused mainly on industrial development, the city has a lot of historic buildings (the register of historical monuments lists nearly 2,000 of them). It is also one of the major film centres in Poland; its numerous film studios have been used by the producers of films known and admired all over the world (e.g. Zbigniew Rybczyński’s *Tango* or Suzie Templeton’s *Peter and the Wolf*). The Łódź Film School boasts such famous graduates as Andrzej Wajda, Krzysztof Kieślowski or the actor and director Jan Machulski. The city’s assets also include one of best special economic zones in the world, and one of the most modern technology parks in Europe as well as its vibrant academic base.

**Table 2.** Participatory budgeting as a tool for supporting public participation in Łódź

	<b>Information</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Involvement</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Empowerment</b>
<b>Public participation goal</b>	Providing the public with information about the new tool and its rules so that the public knows how to use it.	Consulting decisions with the citizens to make sure the decisions respond to their needs.	Involvement of the public in debates about rule formulation and in the project submission process	Collaboration in project preparation and verification so that the authors of projects can improve them and make sure they conform to the rules	Through its projects and later balloting the public should actively participate in urban governance
<b>Promise to the public</b>	We will inform you about everything that concerns participatory budgeting	We will try to make sure your opinions and needs are taken into account	We want to know your opinions and get your ideas in the form of projects	We will inform you about any inaccuracies in your projects and we will help you find the best	All projects selected by you in the ballot will be implemented

				solutions to improve your ideas	
<b>Example public participation techniques</b>	web portal mobile application information meetings	consultation with officials contact points	information meetings submission forms	contact between officials and citizens	balloting submission forms
<b>Stage I (preparing the process; formulating the rules governing the process, information-publicity campaign)</b>	On the city authorities' initiative in collaboration with the citizens. Yes, full information.	Yes, PB rules were consulted with the public.	Partially. The citizens were involved in debates preceding the introduction of PB.	No. No collaboration in rule formulation.	No. In the end the citizens did not define BP rules.
<b>Stage II (formulation and submission of project proposals)</b>	Yes, full information.	Yes, all authors could consult their projects with relevant officials.	Yes, full involvement.	Yes, full collaboration between officials and the public.	N/A
<b>Stage III (verification of projects, discussion about projects)</b>	Yes, full information.	Yes, full consultation.	Yes, full involvement.	Yes, full collaboration between officials and authors of projects – possibility of making corrections to the project.	Yes. All proposals meeting the formal and legal requirements were positively verified.
<b>Stage IV (selection of projects to be carried out)</b>	Yes, full information.	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes, the winning projects were included in the city budget.
<b>Stage V (implementation monitoring and evaluation)</b>	Yes. Full information.	Partially. Proposed changes consulted during evaluation	Partially. Involving the citizens in the evaluation process by encouraging them to fill in questionnaires	Partially through positive response to the citizens' grassroots initiative in this respect	Partially by taking the public opinion into account

Source: author's own analysis

Parametric assessment of the implementation of participatory budgeting in Łódź in the context of stimulating public participation:

$\Sigma$  (Information, Consultation, Involvement, Collaboration, Empowerment) =

$([10+7+6+5+5])/5$

$\Sigma(33/5)$

## Σ(6,6)

The Łódź participatory budget is rightly called one of the best in Poland: it was above average when compared with model solutions (6.6 out of possible 10) and thus considerably stimulated public participation. The participatory budgeting procedure involved various groups, including housing cooperatives, residential district councils, NGOs, parishes and groups of citizens brought together by specific projects. Worthy of note is also the participation of groups at risk of social exclusion, i.e. the elderly, people with disabilities, children as well as people previously not participating actively in any actions for the public good. The most significant weaknesses of the analysed solution include the fact that the rules of participatory budgeting were defined by the authorities despite earlier consultations with the public. It is hard to say to what extent the citizens' proposals were taken into account in the first edition, which suggests that the element was not fully participatory. This can be explained by the experimental, pilot-like nature of the first edition of the Łódź model; the city authorities declared they would be more open to public involvement in rule formulation in subsequent editions.

Łódź's participatory budget is a good example of how the solution should be introduced in other cities. Of course some mistakes were made, but we need to remember that such actions always mean taking considerable risk. To quote B. Martela, who participated in the procedure: "This does not change the fact that the approach of the local government to participatory budgeting was in many respects exemplary. (...) The first edition of participatory budgeting was undoubtedly a success. Łódź decided to embark on a complicated participatory process without taking any shortcuts. Well-thought-out rules, huge effort on the part of the authorities and administration, involvement of NGOs in the campaign and, above all, huge public enthusiasm have made Łódź's participatory budgeting an example of good practice" [Martela].

Officials from Łódź who took part in the Congress of Sustainable Cities in Wrocław in December 2013 described their idea of participatory budgeting as follows: "We decided to introduce participatory budgeting to increase Łódź's social capital. Participatory budgeting was an answer to the question of the actual involvement of the public in decision-making processes. From the very beginning we knew that the creation of a citizens' budget should be a participatory process. We wanted a model developed together by all actors who cared about the city's future. (...) In the end we received 908 proposals. It was an incredible success! Assuming that at least 15 people had to support a project – and we did count those people who had signed the forms – it can be said that about 50,000 people living in Łódź became involved in project creation. This was an incredible value already at the very beginning of the implementation of

the tool. In addition, we managed to build a whole new official-citizen relationship and have officials themselves think for the authors of the proposals, advise them for their projects to succeed. In the end 759 proposals were voted on. When the number of people taking part in the ballot exceeded 100,000, we could say that at least in this one area Łódź became the champion of Poland. We reached out with the ballot to people in residential districts, to citizen-friendly places, e.g. libraries, culture centres. 90,000 voted via the Internet, while 30,000 used traditional ballot papers. In total 129,000 people voted on projects financed under the participatory budgeting initiative” [Justyński].

**Warsaw: from a local centre to a big city**

Warsaw, Poland’s capital and a European metropolis, is the biggest city in the country. Its urban history goes back to the 13th century, though it did not become Poland’s capital until 1596, when King Sigismund III Vasa transferred his residence from Kraków to Warsaw. The city had always been an important point on the map of Poland, situated as it was at a crossroads of trade routes. After becoming Poland’s capital city, Warsaw started to grow very rapidly as a modern economic, cultural and political centre. Over the following centuries the city underwent a transformation which gave rise to its nickname of “Paris of the East” in recognition of its strong position in this part of Europe. The city, which has witnessed a number of key events in the history of Poland, currently covers an area of over 517 km<sup>2</sup> inhabited by nearly 2 million people. In addition, as the country’s capital, it attracts tourists, students and migrants who want to get to know the history of the city and the country or who are seeking their future there. Warsaw is the largest city in Poland in terms of its population. It also has the biggest budget for investments financed with its own resources and European Union funds. This considerably increases the number of projects relating to the development of services and basic infrastructure.

**Table 3.** Participatory budgeting as a tool for supporting public participation in Warsaw

	<b>Information</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Involvement</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Empowerment</b>
<b>Public participation goal</b>	Providing the public with information about the new tool and its rules so that the public knows how to use it.	Consulting decisions with the citizens to make sure they respond to their needs and demands.	Working with the citizens, setting up special participatory budgeting teams to fully understand their needs.	Collaboration during rule formulation (partial) and project verification so that the authors of proposals can improve them and make sure they	Through its projects and later balloting the public should actively participate in the governance of the various districts and the city as a whole.

				conform to the rules.	
<b>Promise to the public</b>	We will inform you about matters relating to participatory budgeting	We will try to make sure your opinions and needs are taken into account	We will involve you as much as possible to make sure the decisions taken satisfy you.	We will inform you about any inaccuracies in your projects and we will help you find the best solutions to improve your ideas	All projects selected by you in the ballot will be implemented
<b>Example public participation techniques</b>	information leaflets web portal	consultation hours contact points	participatory budget teams workshops	contact between officials and citizens	balloting submission forms
<b>Stage I (preparing the process; formulating the rules governing the process, information-publicity campaign)</b>	Yes, full information.	Yes, PB rules were consulted with the public.	Yes, special PB Teams were set up	Partially. Collaboration within PB Teams. Each district had some freedom when it came to detailed arrangements.	No. In the end the main rules were defined by the authorities.
<b>Stage II (formulation and submission of project proposals)</b>	Yes, full information.	Yes. Authors could consult their proposals with specialists.	Yes. Full involvement.	Yes, full collaboration.	N/A
<b>Stage III (verification of projects, discussion about projects)</b>	Yes, full information.	Yes, full consultation.	Yes, full involvement.	Partially. Collaboration with officials and possibility of correcting proposals only up to a certain date.	Yes. All proposals meeting the formal and legal requirements were positively verified.
<b>Stage IV (selection of projects to be carried out)</b>	Yes, full information.	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes, the winning projects were earmarked for implementation.
<b>Stage V (implementation monitoring and evaluation)</b>	Partially. No information about progress and no implementation schedule.	Partially. Proposed changes consulted during evaluation.	Partially. Involving the citizens in the evaluation process by encouraging them to fill in questionnaires.	None	None

Source: author's own analysis

Parametric assessment of the implementation of participatory budgeting in Warsaw in the context of stimulating public participation:



$$\Sigma (\text{Information, Consultation, Involvement, Collaboration, Empowerment}) =$$

$$([9+7+7+4+4]/5)$$

$$\Sigma(31/5)$$

$$\Sigma(6.2)$$

Warsaw has one of the highest public participation ratios (6.2 out of 10) among the analysed cities. Worthy of note is the division of the city into smaller areas, which enabled each district to have a separate participatory budget. Despite the fact that (like in all Polish cities) the main rules were defined by the authorities, each district had considerable freedom in making the rules more specific, a process that involved the public. It is a very good practice worth following.

Poland's capital city prepared for the introduction of the rules of public participation for a long time, but it can be said that its first attempt has been successful (provided that the winning projects are implemented). Let us hope that this element of the city's broader modernisation strategy will become a permanent feature in Warsaw and that thanks to this and many other ideas the city will be governed effectively with its citizens participating extensively in the process. It seems that at this point the city is serious about the key rules of participatory budgeting: the citizens' decisions concern clearly defined and limited financial resources, Warsaw's authorities have already declared that participatory budgeting will be a regular process, public debate has been ensured as has been broad public involvement in participatory budgeting.

### **Wrocław: Learning from one's mistakes and from one's betters**

Wrocław is one of the most important and largest Polish cities. It is also one of the oldest urban centres in Poland, historical capital of Silesia and administrative capital of the Lower Silesian Province. In the past the city stood at the crossroads of two major trade routes: Amber Trail and Via Regia, which boosted trade and general development of the metropolis. During the Second World War the city was proclaimed a fortress ("Festung Breslau") and a substantial part of it was destroyed during the fighting. It was also the birthplace of the anti-communist organisation "Solidarność Walcząca" [Fighting Solidarity] and a youth initiative called "Pomarańczowa Alternatywa" [Orange Alternative], which tried to fight communism by ridiculing it, using dwarves – now one of the city's symbols – for the purpose. According to the Central Statistical Office, Wrocław is the fourth largest city in Poland in terms of its population (over 630,000)

and fifth in terms of its surface area (nearly 300 km<sup>2</sup>). It is one of the most important academic and cultural centres in Poland. There are many higher education institutions, theatres, museums, parks and historic monuments known all over Europe.

**Table 4.** Participatory budgeting as a tool for supporting public participation in Wrocław in 2013

	<b>Information</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Involvement</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Empowerment</b>
<b>Public participation goal</b>	Providing the public with information about the new tool.	Decisions not consulted with the public.	The public involved only at the project submission stage. Goal: to obtain proposals.	None	Through its projects and balloting the public can participate in urban governance.
<b>Promise to the public</b>	We will inform you about matters relating to Wrocław citizens' budget (WCB)	We will consult nothing with you, we will define the rules and implement the projects.	We will give you an opportunity to express your needs and become involved in the city's affairs.	Thanks to the WCB we will get to know your needs	By allocating funds to the citizens' budget, we will increase your empowerment by e.g. increasing the amount earmarked for the purpose
<b>Example public participation techniques</b>	web portal information leaflets	None	submission forms	partially submission forms	submission forms balloting
<b>Stage I (preparing the process; formulating the rules governing the process, information-publicity campaign)</b>	Yes, full information.	No, no consultation of the rules with the public.	No.	No.	No. Rules have been defined by the authorities
<b>Stage II (formulation and submission of project proposals)</b>	Yes, full information.	No. Authors could not consult their proposals with specialists.	Partially. Citizens submitted their proposals, but could not be sure that their projects would be put to the ballot.	No. No collaboration between officials and the public.	N/A
<b>Stage III (verification of projects, discussion about projects)</b>	Yes, full information.	No. Officials verified the proposals and chose those that were to be put to the ballot.	No. Officials verified the proposals and chose those that were to be put to the ballot.	No. Officials verified the proposals and chose those that were to be put to the ballot.	No. Officials verified the proposals and chose those that were to be put to the ballot.
<b>Stage IV (selection of projects to be carried out)</b>	Yes, full information.	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes, the winning projects were earmarked for implementation.

<b>Stage V (implementation monitoring and evaluation)</b>	Yes, full information.	None	Partially. Involving the citizens in the evaluation process by encouraging them to express their opinions about the WCB.	None	None
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**Source:** author's own analysis

Parametric assessment of the implementation of participatory budgeting in Wrocław in 2013 in the context of stimulating public participation:

**$\Sigma$  (Information, Consultation, Involvement, Collaboration, Empowerment) =**

$([10+0+0,4+0+0.84]/5)$

$\Sigma(14/5)$

$\Sigma(3.2)$

The first edition of the WCO, often referred to as the pilot edition, is an example of a weak participation practice (3.2 out of 10): citizens had no real influence of the form and scope of the tool, and the city authorities took no steps to increase public participation. The most important shortcomings of the Wrocław pilot project included lack of contact between officials and authors of proposals at the project submission stage (which would have made it possible to resolve many formal doubts) and during verification. Incomplete or incorrect projects were eliminated from the process, instead of being accepted after corrections, which would certainly have boosted citizens' permanent involvement. The weaknesses also included the city's information policy as well as political decision-makers' dismissive attitude to the solution.

Despite the fact that the first edition of participatory budgeting in Wrocław was presented as a pilot edition supposed to test how such a solution would be received in the city, some people were dissatisfied by the limited funds earmarked for the purpose (comparative analyses have shown it was the lowest ratio in Poland [Kębłowski 2014]). In this respect the comparison was between the city's financial contribution and that of Łódź. The mayor caused a scandal, when he said in a radio interview that people who did not like the Wrocław solution should move to Łódź. Later the mayor apologised for his ill-considered remark, but some citizens remembered it as irresponsible and dismissive [see: Koziół, Wójcik].

In addition, not all investment projects were earmarked for implementation immediately after the ballot. Some did not make it into the city's plans for 2013 and had to be transferred to the city's budget adopted for the following year. Despite the fact that the practice did comply with the rules for the entire process specified earlier, some people expressed their opposition to

the city authorities and criticised them saying that the postponed projects would be forgotten or that the funds earmarked for their implementation would be reduced [Kozioł, Torz]. The misunderstanding was due to a poor publicity campaign for the WCB and lack of information for the public about the detailed regulations. This was obviously only a minor shortcoming, but, unfortunately, it had a negative impact on the image of and citizens' opinion about the WCB. Despite subsequent explanations and information that work was under way but for the moment focused on planning and organisation of tenders [Skupin], some people ceased to believe in the legitimacy of the venture. Nevertheless, a decision was made to continue the work on the Wrocław model of participatory budgeting in 2014, followed by a declaration that the amount allocated for the purpose would be increased to PLN 20,000,000.

### **Participatory budgeting as an innovation in urban governance in Poland – main findings**

The case studies presented here suggest that the quality of participatory budgeting itself and the degree of public participation measured by citizen empowerment depend on detailed solutions adopted. As the practice in the selected Polish cities showed, some local governments limited the role of the public in the whole process only to submission of proposals and balloting (e.g. Sopot or Wrocław). There were also cities that were more open to treating citizens as partners (Warsaw) or even opted for participatory governance, involving the public in the formulation of participatory budgeting procedures. Each model should add value by adopting measures that will best respond to the expectations of people in the given community. A good solution could be to set up joint teams bringing together various groups of stakeholders (e.g. participatory budgeting teams set up in the districts of Warsaw). In-depth analyses of the selected cities have demonstrated that participatory budgeting is regarded as a tool functioning on the margins, as it were, of modern governance solutions with which the public sector in Poland is currently grappling. Separated from the existing systemic solutions (none of the analysed examples is part of a quality management system, none is part of a local development strategy and thus is not part of strategic management), each model is treated as a solution on its own, a solution that needs a new organisational framework instead of being integrated with already existing systems. Thus none of the analysed cases reflects the modernising trends associated with participatory governance of cities, especially in the context of the “urban governance” approach, i.e. none stimulates public participation in its model version. In the context of reflections on the prospects of participatory budgeting in Poland it is especially important to see this solution in systemic terms, i.e. with regard to factors determining the whole process at

the very beginning (goals and motivations), way of implementing it (the process itself) and its effects (results). None of the Polish solution comes close to the model solution, i.e. participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre. The compilation presented below may be useful in determining the directions and trends of Polish solutions, and in taking remedial measures, because none of these solutions stimulates public participation to an extent sufficient for us to speak of modernising and reforming – not to mention innovative – mechanisms for managing local development.

**Table 5.** Characteristics of participatory budgeting as an innovation in urban governance in Poland

Characteristics of PB as a reform	Present in:			
	Sopot	Łódź	Warsaw	Wrocław
<b>1. PB uses, as much as possible, the experiences and traditions of social activism as well as earlier participation mechanisms</b>	No	No	Partially	Partially
<b>2. PB is a result of constant collaboration of as broad a group of “actors” as possible. The budget planning process is in itself participatory</b>	No	Partially	Partially	No
<b>3. PB is part of administrative reform</b>	No	No	No	No
<b>4. PB combines both top-down and bottom-up goals</b>	Partially	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>5. PB is inclusive – it involves the citizens in the public debate</b>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>6. PB uses attractive forms to create space for discussions about urban policy</b>	No	Partially	Yes	Yes
<b>7. PB not only seeks deliberation and consensus among the participants, but also makes it possible to express conflicting views – different visions of the city</b>	No	No	No	Yes
<b>8. PB is a multi-level process – it allows the public to have a say with regard not only to specific projects but also general investment priorities</b>	No	No	No	No
<b>9. PB is educational – it enables people not only to have a say but also to learn how the city functions</b>	No	Partially	Yes	Yes
<b>10. PB participants are treated as equal partners – none of the “actors” is in a privileged position. The division into “citizens” and “officials” is eliminated by assigning to all the same role of “process participants”</b>	No	Partially	No	No
<b>11. PB combines elements of direct and representative democracy – its participants not</b>	No	Partially	Partially	No

<b>only talk about the city but also become co-responsible for it</b>				
<b>12. PB participants are also its co-organisers – they make decisions about its rules, topics and criteria used in the evaluation of submitted investment proposals</b>	No	No	No	No
<b>13. PB relies on the principle of the so-called inversion of priorities</b>	No	No	Partially	No
<b>14. PB is binding and brings visible effects</b>	No	Partially	No data	Yes
<b>15. Some investment projects should be carried out before the beginning of the next round</b>	No	Yes	No	Yes
<b>16. The citizens monitor the implementation of investment projects selected under PB</b>	No	Partially	No data	Partially
<b>17. The citizens can annually (or more often) evaluate and thus change PB procedures</b>	No	Partially	No data	Partially
<b>18. PB is a regularly repeated and not one-off initiative</b>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

No data: if it is still too early to say unequivocally yes or no

**Source:** Author's own analysis based on: [http://www.institutobywatelski.pl/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/budzet\\_partycypacyjny.pdf](http://www.institutobywatelski.pl/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/budzet_partycypacyjny.pdf) (access: 4.04.2015), pp. 35–38 and Puško R., “Budżet obywatelski Białegostoku na tle rozwiązań modelowych”, [in:] Maszkowska A., Sztop-Rutkowska K. (eds), *Partycypacja obywatelska- decyzje bliższe ludziom*. Białystok 2013, pp. 119-121.

The above compilation shows that the implementation of participatory budgeting in the selected Polish examples is not systemic. The choice of the various elements that make urban governance innovative in the form of “participatory governance” is often random, discretionary, inconsistent and not coherent with other elements. Thus the most appropriate point of reference illustrating the nature of solutions employed so far is a set of jigsaw puzzle pieces, which are chosen – usually arbitrarily by the public authorities – one by one from the whole puzzle and are put together to form any picture they want. Citizens are rarely invited to join in the game, and even if they are, they do not have the full set of the pieces, which means that the jigsaw puzzle cannot be completed. Thus there emerges something that should be a comprehensive solution but is instead a not very effective measure in the context of increasing public participation in the governance of Polish cities.

That is why organisers of participatory budgeting representing public administration should seek to involve the citizens and NGOs as much as possible in the process and to instil in the citizens a sense of ownership of the process, at the same time maintaining overall responsibility for the process on the part of municipal authorities. This is pointed out by e.g. W. Kębłowski, who has studied the implementation of participatory budgeting in Poland. As he writes, “joint verification and implementation of grassroots initiatives as well as joint evaluation of the rules should be part of a broad strategy of making the citizens co-responsible for

participatory budgets and thus for the policies of their cities, counties and regions. This necessitates combining within participatory budgeting elements of direct democracy and representative democracy so that all participants can adapt their level of involvement to their resources and needs. (...) Virtually no Polish participatory budget makes citizens more responsible for their cities by combining elements of direct and representative democracy. The question of responsibility and maturity is almost always approached unilaterally – within the framework of participatory budgeting the citizens are to “show their mettle” or “distinguish themselves” in front of the officials and councillors, who do not have to meet such requirements. (...) Responsibility for participatory budgeting and thus for the development of cities rests with the officials and councillors – thus the paradigm of local government policy does not change” [Kębłowski 2014]. We should bear in mind that factors that are key to the success of participatory budgeting are mutual trust between the citizens and authorities – which relies on transparency of the rules, openness of the process to citizens’ participation in its organisation and involvement of the citizens in discussions about the procedure – and partnership, which can be developed only if the above values and principles are respected. This particular element is associated with the weaknesses of the analysed models of participatory budgeting in Polish cities. What needs to be done in order to increase trust is to reduce the distance between decision-makers and citizens, and to build a shared conviction that participatory budgeting is to empower people – which will benefit both sides. The goal of measures taken as part of participatory budgeting should be to strengthen and build local bonds among citizens around joint ideas and initiatives submitted within the framework of participatory budgeting. Ultimately, participatory budgeting should help boost the citizens’ interest in the affairs of their local community and enable them to become involved in the decision-making process concerning its development, e.g. by taking part in public consultations, using the mechanisms of local initiative or citizens’ initiative to submit proposals for council decisions.

## **Conclusions**

The introduction into urban governance practice of the idea of participatory budgeting in Polish socio-political reality can be viewed as a positive sign of change: lack of favourable legal conditions, weakness of civil society, not very democratic political culture, reluctance to participate – these are all factors that do not facilitate the procedure. However, what can be described as “vogue for participatory budgeting” has resulted in the introduction of the tool in

over 70 local governments over a relatively short period of three years. Another positive aspect is the citizens' willingness to be involved in the development of the tool and subsequent implementation of projects. Yet this positive opinion does not fail to mention the numerous weaknesses and shortcomings. The biggest of them in the analysed case studies turned out to be a lack of strong links to the existing local development policies. If participatory budgeting is to become an effective local policy tool, it should be combined with strategic thinking tools and, above all, be part of a development strategy. What can be regarded as an optimistic sign is the fact that in each of the case studies in question participatory budgeting turned out to be a mechanism for improving solutions adopted earlier, which reflects the desirable concept of "learning organisation". Worthy of note is the openness to more changes and corrections to the procedure. Other analyses of participatory budgeting in Poland [Kębłowski 2014, Stokłuska, Martela], too, show that the local governments that decide to introduce participatory budgeting generally seek mass participation, not necessarily over the long-term but already in the first year. A large number of projects submitted and of people participating in the ballot become the basis of legitimacy, as it were. Such an assumption seems to be confirmed by the fact that all analysed participatory budgets provide for a public vote in which citizens can participate without participating actively in public discussions. W. Kębłowski claims that the procedures of participatory budgeting adopted in Poland do not go hand in hand with quality and the authorities too often focus on quantity, i.e. percentage of citizens involved or number of investment projects proposed, interpreting this as a sign of success, which translates into treating participatory budgeting not as a process but, rather, as an experiment. According to Kębłowski, in the case of many local governments interest in participatory budgeting stems from their desire to use it as a tool to achieve preconceived goals [Kębłowski]. However, so far no participatory budget implemented city-wide has tried to introduce more deliberative mechanisms involving e.g. taking decisions directly during meetings, after discussions.

Thus in order to forecast future trends and directions of the implementation of participatory budgeting in Poland, we need to know whether and to what extent citizens' decisions are binding. Do citizens' decisions concern clearly defined and limited financial resources? Will participatory budgeting in a given city be a regular occurrence? Is participatory budgeting based on transparent rules? Does participatory budgeting provide for a debate? Has broad participation of citizens in participatory budgeting been ensured? Are officials trying to avoid arbitrariness when verifying projects? Answers in the affirmative to these questions, which take into account key rules of model participatory budgeting, will be a sign of



professionalisation of the implementation of the tool, and a sign of greater democratisation of processes in the management of local government.

To conclude, it could be said, after W. Kębłowski, that Poland has developed a specific model of participatory budgeting: city authorities have modified it in order not to give too much power to the public. It can even be termed “empowerment without empowerment”: for representatives of public administration the very fact of allocating no more than a few per cent of cities’ budgets to the public’s participation in decision-making concerning public funds is a manifestation of power transfer and power sharing, but on the other hand when we see model solutions and their implementation in cities outside Poland, we can understand that we cannot speak of empowerment to a desirable degree at this stage. The rules are usually imposed from above, there were no signs in the various editions of partnership between officials and citizens, and the initiative itself is not part of a broader reform in managing local development or modernising the functioning of the public sector. Of course, we should bear in mind that the solutions used in the various cities differ and in each city participatory budgeting can be implemented in a different manner. Nevertheless, although it should be adapted to the local specificity, it should also take into account model, universal rules of participatory budgeting. In order to modernise processes taking place locally in the public sphere, what is needed in the implementation of participatory budgeting is room for discussion and deliberation on local matters. Only by working together to look for and agree on solutions and then by respecting them at the decision-making and subsequently implementation stage can we ensure long-term and competent involvement of citizens in public affairs. Consequently, we will have more legitimacy of decisions, better quality in their implementation as well as higher effectiveness thanks to collaboration and synergy of capitals for urban governance.

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